POETRY QUARTERLY

WINTER - 1941

In this issue :

NEW BOOKS FROM GREY WALLS
by Clifford Bax

POEMS
by Alan Brook, Nicholas Moore
Alex Comfort Ian Serraillier
Roy McFadden Robert Greacen
John Gawsworth Eric Nixon
and others

REVIEWS
by Samuel J. Looker, E. Curt Peters, etc.

Edited by Wrey Gardiner

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Book of the Quarter—

"THE SOLITARY MAN," by Richard Church.
Edition limited to 900 copies. Dent 7/6

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EDITORIAL

With this issue POETRY QUARTERLY completes its third year in these difficult times for the publisher. Even Dr. Goebbels now agrees that contemporary thought is a most important factor in the struggle for survival. We hope therefore that our readers have made their contribution by giving books as presents this Christmas. And we feel that they will not have forgotten to provide the Cinderella of the arts —poetry—with something to buy a ribbon for her rags. POETRY QUARTERLY we are glad to say now goes to the soldier in his camp, the sailor who heads his letters to us "At Sea," and the airman on his isolated aerodrome, and we feel that we are keeping alive for them a world they have been obliged to leave.

On another page we print Mr. Clifford Bax's views on the Grey Walls Anthologies and the Nature Diaries of Richard Jefferies, but observe that he is among those who can still use the name of T. S. Eliot as a stick with which to belabour the good name of modern poetry. The Times Literary Supplement, too, has not been slow in its efforts to rally the forces of reaction by painting a heavily paragraphed picture of Mr. Eliot as a spent force in the vague and gloomy recesses of retirement. There was no doubt in the later days of W. B. Yeats as to his supreme position as a poet. To-day Eliot is not a young man, and will no longer do as the Aunt Sally of the new school. In spite of very great differences of opinion, it is widely held that he is the only living poet using the English language whose utterance is without any doubt in a major category.

NEW BOOKS FROM GREY WALLS

by

CLIFFORD BAX

A man may more easily make a fool of himself when pronouncing judgment upon a book of new verse than in any other way. A young reviewer is in danger of over-estimating the value of work produced under the influence of immediate fashions in verse, and of course an old or middle aged critic is likely indeed to mishear any poetry that has been written since he was, let us say, thirty-six. Nevertheless, we have sometimes to stake our own judgment against that which will presently be pronounced by the High Court of posterity.

The Grey Walls Press has entered the world with the gay courage of the crocus in March. It may seem a crazy time to start a new series of high-hearted publications but what a triumph the initiators will have if they can outlast the shortage of labour and paper! Now, "This Living Stone" is a collection of poems by more than fifty writers, nearly all of them, presumably, young. It is entirely unaffected by the too-clever, unintelligible, jaundiced and grotesquely over-praised movement which is most prominently represented by T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden. For my part, I am quite willing to wait patiently until those poets have outworn their extravagant welcome: but because the Grey Walls poets are of another school, let it not be assumed that every one of them is an incipient immortal. On the contrary, they are still like art-students who have just begun to work in the life-class.

What are their salient faults? One, that they write from line to line, not looking where they are going, and therefore, apparently, do not think of a poem as a shape that ought to be as pleasing as a well-formed vase. Two, that they splash words with a hearty abandon, not perceiving that if they use the word "yellow" they must give it time to make its mark on the reader's mind and not instantly cancel its effect by referring to objects which have blue or grey associations. The reader's imagination is the poet's canvas, and the poet must not make a mess of it. Three, that they use rhyme and yet often waste what it has to give. Four, that they seldom suit their rhythms to their emotions (to do so is the only justification for not writing prose) and rarely even keep to one mood.

A. E. Edwards (p.26) writes four placid lines. He then adds some twenty more which are spritely in rhythm and

not of a piece with his opening. Even Wrey Gardiner himself (p.47) uses the rhyme-scheme "stairs—bars—cares—stars," a series in which there is obviously no vowel-music but only monotony. Samuel Looker (p.21) leaves his music unresolved by hoping that we shall hear a rhyme-pair which are parted by ten lines. The effect is to leave his poem trailing in limbo; but he atones (p.63) with one of the few lyrics in this book which are complete forms. Leonard Clark (p.35) contributes another, and so does Margaret Howorth (p.67) who also matches her cadence to her theme.

The Dorset poem (p.50) is, in my judgment, the best in the book and, knowing how fiercely the highbrows would assail my choice, I wish that I had room enough to justify it, but I must hasten toward that other Grey Walls anthology, "One Plum More." Mr. Looker, who edits it, has loved poetry throughout his life as ardently as any man can have loved it; and, as an editor, he has the best of all qualifications, —a sure and entirely independent taste. There is no hackneyed poem in his collection (which flows from 1586 to 1903), and there is no poem which does not deserve its place. Even some of our best-known poets here show us that they had many a fine piece at the back of the shop and that all was not in the shop-window. I had no suspicion that Theodore Wratislaw had written poems which, surviving the most dangerous period which a poem has to encounter, still vibrate with the mental life that was first imparted to them. Mr. Looker, searching the old tree of English poetry, has in fact found not only one plum more than we knew the tree to be bearing but some sixty ripe and juicy mouthfuls. Here's a fine Christmas present—and going at five shillings! I cannot understand why the *Literary Supplement* should superciliously chide Mr. Looker for reprinting Wilde's Sonnet on the Sale of Keats' love-letters. They call this poem "pretty." I regard it is a fine statement of burning indignation. "Pretty," indeed!

In a wiser world Mr. Alvar Liddell would have begun the News this evening by announcing that the Grey Walls Press has just published parts of the nature-diaries and notebooks of Richard Jefferies, the most poetic and one of the most observant of all English naturalists. Mr. Liddell, not quite able to control his excitement, would then break the news that this book actually contains an essay ("A Tangle of Autumn") which has not hitherto been printed; and we might even hear that the Government had decided to ration copies of "Nature-Diaries, by Richard Jefferies: edited by Samuel J. Looker" at 8/6d. a copy, until larger stocks can be released. That is what should be happening. Meanwhile,

let us in our restricted ways do our best to broadcast such happy news.

Few readers or nature-lovers will dissent from Mr. Looker in his estimate that "Jefferies is not only the most English, but also one of the most eloquent writers this country has known. He is a less close recorder of the ways of the earth than White of Selborne, less a politican and philosopher than Henry Thoreau of Concord, less a God-intoxicated nature-lover than Wordsworth of the Lakes or John Clare of the Fens, and less a commentator on the commonplace than W. H. Hudson, that stranger from a far land, yet in spite of it all, Jeffries surpasses them in his sheer pagan delight in the beauty of the earth." Mr. Looker is also right to proclaim the excellence of Jefferies' prose. It is lucent, melodious and flexible, and only a crass world could have managed not to notice it. Mr. Looker, who knows his subject so intimately, enables us to study the shaping of that prose because he has reprinted under various "notes" in the note-books the passages which Jefferies ultimately constructed about these nuclei of observation.

Jefferies had undoubtedly a distaste for humanity. He would enthusiastically have quoted those famous lines about the Human Race and its Silly Face: but you cannot read far into his books without realising that his life was directed by a quite exceptional passion for beauty, and that he suffered unaffectedly because humanity fell so far short of his ideal,—an ideal which he ardently believed to be attainable.

We have almost the core of his fine personality in this passage from Mr. Looker's extracts:—

"To do good to humanity is well, yet it is not enough—it is only rational. I want something more than rationalism (goodness) alone on the hill by the sea. The transcendental repose of the Soul is most of all." To this note Mr. Looker appends the following lines from "The Story of my Heart" . . . . "It is eternity now. I am in the midst of it. It is about me in the sunshine; I am in it, as the butterfly floats in the light-laden air. Now is eternity; now is the immortal life . . . . It is eternity now, it always was eternity, and always will be. By no possible means could I get into time if I tried. I am in eternity now and must there remain. Haste not, be at rest, this Now is eternity."

There have been few better attempts, in West or East, to express that fundamental mystical experience which is, inevitably, like "love that never told can be."

Elegy from "The Year of Loss"

Contrition, contrition . . . let the eyes weep, O heart.
From all the flow of tears no absolvence comes.
There is no assuaging the years of fear and blood

A yew-tree grows in a churchyard, cold
Stone tombs about, and the wind blowing upon
The still stiff stems of flowers . . . Contrition,
contrition.

The conqueror is lusty and afraid,
O afraid of the mortal dust, O heart.
The contrite heart of him mourns in the earth.

Weep tearful eyes! Where mole and rabbit burrow
Lies all that once was good to look upon.
The still stiff stems of flowers, O heart . . . .
Contrition . . .

NICHOLAS MOORE.

To Unawakened Earth : Epilogue

Curtain drop, applause begin.
Fumble for the midnight key, and let
yourself in
Softly, posting a prayer to the stars.
Man's little wars
Have mastered him. But cleanse our dreams
Deep in the silvergrey of starshot wells
And dark moon-blooded streams,
Till we spring to welcome the dawn in a
clash of bells.

Bells splintering the furtive steeples
Carolling in the second birth:
O love, I send my song among the peoples,
A trumpet blast to unawakened earth.

ROY McFADDEN

John

Friends that I sang to in the valley
friends that I walked with in the wheat
passing the jasmine haunted
dull arches of evening.

O hope believed
that smiled but smiled in vain.

Know there are shadows in the valley
know the wheat is a trampled flame
know the dreams we planned
are pebbles for your throwing.

O hope believed
that smiled but smiled in vain.

Once was evening for the knowing
once was moon red in belief
once were the veins dark with love
and the cradled child sleeping.

O hope believed
that smiled but smiled in vain.

The rivers of Thames and Medway
are fainting along the rushes
the stallion thought the towers
lofty toward the future.

O hope believed
that smiled but smiled in vain.

Now is the sky our river
the fishes bear a knife

O hope believed

and the steel pierces the branches
and the white shirt of the streets.

O hope in vain

And the red rose of the future
sheds her petals one by one
the foam-flecked waves of our glances
meet the jonquils of the sea.

O hope believed
that smiled to smile again.

Cold and strong above the cliffs, turning toward
you,
whilst the year resounded
towers and waves came

Only on this steel hour the necessity for sorrow
inescapable compulsion
to grant sorrow a name.

O hope that is, believed that smiled,
O hope that was, in vain

ALAN ROOK.

Cereus

The plant of thirst, on the white sill,
the tall jade cactus in the sun
grows upon wattle and green keel
and lozenge wart an amber down

and contemplates the hot white well
sun-lattice traversed, sees the red
aspiring wall where boxes spill
at every sill nasturtium blood—

watches along the tawny roofs
—a brindle thicket in the sun—
the lean cat, as his chimney loves
file through his sunned and sleepy brain.

The beetle hats, perspective legs,
the Ants, whose wise antennae meet,
the warrior and the xenophage,
the food that runs, the jaws that wait;

so run the small heads, and the plant
thirsty with sunlight sees them go—
who watched the grave Ants toil and pant
a hundred years in Mexico.

ALEX COMFORT.

Epilogue
To M.H.B.

Foretold, foreseen, forewept,
yet it is sadder now,
that we have blindly kept,
our foolish, final vow.

Unknowing, we are sad,
and find no comforter;
for battle's strain unclad—
love was our armourer.

The dawn but lights our eyes
in broken memory;
the fates alone devise
that such joy cannot be.

Love, it seems, is strange,
abides empiric laws:
no gods knew how to change
the set, eternal clause.

And, as we turn towards the night,
the gods are sleeping:
while, in the world that was delight,
we are weeping.

PETER BAKER.

Willow and Snow

Under the thunder the willow
and the swallow leaping:
the laughing tree, the blue snow
and the great wind blowing.

O magnolia you wander
under the thunder sleeping
with your blown blossom asunder:
in your red core weeping.

ERIC NIXON.

Sleep

From the slow solemn ticking on the stair,
from cheek fast in pillow and chin
in eiderdown, from limbs yet sensate
to the breathing of a new nerveless air.
My heart is not mine now nor yours,
for Life holds it close in his hand;
he is the pilot of my nightly ship,
and Love the moving sea between the shores.
But O the anguish and the death when
the day raider comes and at a bound
destroys our quiet harbour! Ear listens
to what fingers feel—the cruelty and burning,
the noisy stolen tide, and eye
sees anchor broken and the dear sea dry.

IAN L. SERRAILLIER.

Craftsmanship

As green and gold as the meadows run
In the poppied peace of a July sun,

As palely blue as the eagles soar
On the far snow-peaks of Ecuador,

As black as the midnight waves that lie
Under the hush of an Arctic sky,

As strangely-coloured, as rich, as brave,
As the hidden spoils of a wizard's cave,

Bright and burnished with patient care
As ever craftsman on jewels rare,

And fair with the fairness of all fair things
Is the changing light on this dung-fly's wings.

REX CLEMENTS.

Two Poets

Under the congratulating pats of Life
He fell;
Humility, his wife,
Had served him well.

His compeer battered to the floor
That selfsame hour
Had lived with Arrogance the whore
And known not power.

Both Death's, the bookman Time set down with pen
"Annul the first,
He slaked his thirst,
Let Pride's works cheer all unbegotten men."

JOHN GAWSWORTH

The Impulse Springs

The impulse springs from servile rock,
hurling itself against the arrogance
of the solid, static tree.
The hands of prayer are weak:
there is only the undying tree,
of faultless suture made . . .

In my eyes there sparkle stubs of danger,
for she, being stronger, has pulled me to anger.

ROBERT GREACEN

Sterility
(*In Time of War*)

I am barren of music now
who barren am of love,
who somehow, I know not how,
untouched, indifferent prove,
a stricken bough—

Of life a dying part
bearing no bud nor leaf
nor smallest flower of art
since neither joy nor grief
moves now my heart.

Imagination's wings
are furled in this stunned brain,
and thus no pity springs
alive with answering pain
to countless sufferings.

Thus too, delight is fled
that cannot live alone,
that finding pity fled
deserts that heart of stone
where love lies dead.

ASHFORD SEVERN.

My Mute Oblivion is Secret Set

My mute oblivion is secret set
in lotus flowers and willow trees:
stars for design and shadows for draping;
smiles for my mistress and skulls for my lord.

My mute oblivion is secret set
in pearls of my youth and coal of my age;
lutes for my rising and hate in a bed;
blood for my mistress and joy for my lord.

ERIC WRIGHT.

Actaeon Speaking

In those damp fields where the slow cows move
Richly as in their paradise
I have heard the horns of one hunting in the dawn,
Hunting the elusive flame of a hidden light
Beyond the trees, beyond the wasted days.

And in that quiet valley, silent and overgrown
Where I have idled, dreaming, in my youth,
And the knee-high grass swishes at a step,
I have heard Time's ghost hiss slyly
Words floating away on the wind,
Lost in the blue horizon's haze,
Forgotten, but remembered again, undying,
And felt the fear of the dog-toothed years
That will catch up at last and lap my blood,
Telling me love alone is alive and generous to the end.

And now to hear me speak these poor mad words
Diana comes hurrying from her bath,
Wet, to the telephone.

WREY GARDINER.

On Leaving One Place for Another

The train has left the station now and time
hangs dangerously on the brink of space:
the days are but a memory to find
in the clouded sanctuary of my mind.
The Market Square, unaltered, with the lime
twisted in its beams: the sordid brace
of pheasants in the store. Here the town
relentless in its sombre coat of brown.

Behind me lie the elephants and bears
of fantasy. Before, reality,
waiting to divide the simple fears,
the dullness of finality.
O, give me madness and the charm of days
spent in happy, hopeless, haunting ways.

ROSEMARY PEARSON.

Under Grey Skies . . .

Summer lingers: in the border chrysanthemums bud,
Bronzed like holiday-makers returning from the sea;
Apples lie in the orchard; the heather fades
On the moor where the leisured guns moved to the butts;
The log-fire's flickering warmth is welcome after dinner,
And at dawn the autumnal mist lies in the valley.

For the equinox is upon us, darkness predominant
In the six long months while we swing below the line.
Europe goes down into the darkness with blood upon her plains;
Too loudly the footfalls echo in lampless streets;
There will be rationing of pleasure, restriction of living
As the muffling winter days draw in to Christmas.

But this is only a moment: the historian's pen
Traces slow rise and fall on the graph of time;
The meteorologist watches the rising barometer,
And the veering wind brushes the rain from the hills;
Lands that the storm has swept relax in the sunlight,
The rivers sing and the furrow waits for the seed.

ROBIN ATTHILL.

Harvest

Flown the sun's pale glimmers, flocked
expectant on the perimeter
of day, alighting in the shadow
etched along the trellised bay
of shivering wind-toyed boughs.

Mosaic of emerald light pale cast
and filtered through the patterned fret
of autumn's signature scrawled high and
intricate across the vellum
of an opaque sky.

Sifted and winnowed, summer's golden
sunlit hours stealing down to
winter solstice in the hidden
store of yellow apples, ruby chalice,
evening lamps and woman's eyes.

REGINALD AKHURST.

All Souls

Tenderly, dusk and flame together draw
Features within the range of memory.
From the dim vista of the past arise
Familiar forms that long since dwelt with us
In the close intimacy friendship brings.
Clear and more clear they grow, as flickering fires
Weave dusky shadows on the walls and floor,
Till, cheek on hand, in some accustomed pose,
One sits regarding us, with level gaze
From quiet eyes, across the half lit space.
Up in the tree tops winds go whispering
A turn of words, an intimate phrase we knew,
How well, before a dark robed silence came
To hush the voice that was so dear—so dear.

MAY I. E. DOLPHIN.

Mood

O mood with answering mood
How seldom fitting!
And each to other cruel
Without witting;
Heart's lack unguessed, unfilled
The joy that each had willed,
Unanswered by loved eyes:
Strained moments, wasted, void
But for a dead-sea-moan—
A flower with fragrance flown—
A harmony destroyed.

DAVID FRIDLANDER.

The Dance

I saw a dance of death in that drab room,
Where broken arches rose beyond the window,
Black in the winter light;
I saw their hungry faces in the gloom,
And yet they laughed and danced,
Without awareness or delight.
Dead women in that grey place,
With unawakened eyes
And a cold, effortless grace;
I would have given much
To see quick rapture touch
One mouth, to feel that she had known
The warmth of loving,
But awareness had not flown
From any face;
I knew it was too late to pluck
One laughing woman from that dim-lit place.

MABEL E. ALLAN.

Venusberg

The red sun slides
Over the world's bright edge
Gilding the mountainside
Where the withered grass
Shrouds the deep crevasse
And the ivy hangs from the rocky ledge
Trailing its leaves of bronze
In the thick white dust
Shiny green fronds
Lizardlike lying
While the dim sun's dying
On the mountain's wrinkled crust.

PETER WILDEBLOOD.

REVIEWS

The Buried Stream. Collected Poems 1908 *to* 1940 *by Geoffrey Faber. Cr.* 8*vo.* 8/6*d. net.* (*Faber and Faber*).

Bells and Grass. A Book of Rhymes by Walter de la Mare. Cr. 8*vo.* 7/6*d. net.* (*Faber and Faber*).

Marlow Hill. Poems by John Gawsworth. Demy 8*vo.* 1/- *net.* (*Richards*).

1914 *and other Poems, by Rupert Brooke. cr.* 8*vo.* 2/6*d. net. Sesame Books,* (*Faber and Faber*).

IT is an interesting experience to study the collected poems of a publisher who has been called "the godfather of modern English Poetry," and to find that his own work is written along conventional lines in thoughtful, melodious and carefully polished periods. Twenty-five years ago I remember I derived much pleasure from the pages of a book entitled *Interflow: Poems Chiefly Lyrical,* by a young infantry officer named Geoffrey Faber. He was to publish one other volume, *In the Valley of Vision,* two years later, and then to remain silent until the publication of *The Buried Stream.* In a long and closely reasoned preface Mr. Faber tells us that he was too discouraged by the tepid reception given to his second book, after the favourable reviews of the first, to attempt to gain a further hearing. This discomfiture lasted for some years, until in the early twenties the task of the establishment of a publishing business, occupied him more and more. Mr. Faber believes in the slow incubation of poetical ideas, and quotes in this connection the dictum of Coleridge:—"There is no profession on earth, which requires an attention so early, so long, or so unintermitting as that of poetry." Hence his own poetry shows no definite breach with tradition and he may be described as a "literary romantic," for to use his own words, "his interest is directed upon his own feelings, and particularly upon those states of feeling whose felt value outruns rational analysis." The present collection includes most of the poems from *Interflow* and *The Valley of Vision,* with the addition of some fifty poems, written between 1918-1940 and not before published.There are many attractive poems in the book, expressed with sensitive understanding for the undertones of Nature and Love.

This is a very equal collection. There are no poems which fall below a serious standard of accomplishment. The author has left out a few pieces which appeared in the 1915 and 1917 volumes, which he now finds not tolerable, and he states that he has worked upon other of the poems since

their first completed drafts. In the specially difficult form of the sonnet Mr. Faber is very successful. A short sequence entitled *Service*, written in 1915, and another, *Specimen of Agony*, dated 1918, are full of restrained passion. This poet well knows that word music "does not consist in torrents and cataracts of sound bearing down all opposition, overwhelming the senses, but in fineness of outline and delicacy of tone, hinting at emotions deeply felt but not wallowing in the display of them." A number deal with war-time themes, in this war and the last, but they are not warlike. His most impressive utterance is concerned with the peace of nature and the strange contradictions of the dark heart of love in juxtaposition:—

> Always the same dark hour, the same
> Listening and whispering, still and magical hour
> Sweet beyond name
> Of sweetest herb and flower.

> For I possess you; I should know you well,
> Your every curve and gesture, line and hue,
> Your every look and motion. All are mine.
> All, all I treasured up, that I might view
> Yourself in absence. Yet the dear design
> Fades while it forms, its model one week gone.
> Others remain; fails the best loved alone.

Geoffrey Faber makes the modest claim for his poems that they speak in their own individual voice. It is a claim fully justified by their context.

Rainer Maria Rilke, in one of the most moving passages of his prose, to be found in *Malte Laurids Brigge*, says of poetry:—

"Even to have memories is not sufficient. If there are many of them one must be able to forget them, and one must have the great patience to wait till they return. For the memories themselves are not yet what is required. Only if they become blood within us, sight and gesture, nameless and no longer distinguishable from ourselves, only then is it possible in some very rare hour, for the first word of a verse to arise in their midst and to proceed from them."

This is high counsel and but few poets in a generation however great their desire or industry, achieve it. But some of the most interesting work of our time is written by poets in the process of becoming, that is, those who wrestle day and night with their demon. Among such, John Gawsworth is to be counted. His poems are seldom perfectly integrated, although they mostly possess a lyrical impulse which con-

ceals the defects. He too is a poet of disillusion, who proclaims that "the soul of man is on the march to its last bivouac—death." This melancholy gospel pervades *Marlow Hill*. It is intensified by the war and the thought of the fleeting astringent pleasures of love. He longs to "burst Joy's grape against his palate fine," but the after-taste is bitter-sweet. A poet to read with attention and the half-eager, half-nostalgic longing which comes with the conviction of being in solitude "beneath the wide skies of loneliness."

Walter de la Mare is not a noetic poet. His verses in *Bells and Grass*, are like the dew and the rain, refreshing and delightful. About a year ago he found a forgotten manuscript book dating back from 1924. In it were various poems, mostly in the mood of *Peacock Pie*. Some of these verses are printed in the present volume. They tell of the "self that still delighted—and no less that it had in childhood perhaps—in the old folk-tales, in the old nursery rhymes and jingles, in early memories, and in whatever else goes with being young; whether merry or sad, grave or gay or tender." His verse of fantasy and fun is enchanting. It would be an impertinence at this time of day to praise Mr. de la Mare. His place is too secure for any captious criticism to affect him. Neither praise nor blame therefore, but the gratitude that is inevitable for the poetry of one, "not only born young, but who young will always remain."

The latest edition to *The Sesame Books* makes one eager to discover one's attitude of mind towards Rupert Brooke, who was selected as the representative of a lost generation, by people who knew his work very little. With one or two exceptions his poems have no bearing on war, but embody the Edwardian spirit of quiet content, the comfortable world which was to end not with a whimper but a bang. It is for his freshness and delight in natural things that Rupert Brooke will appeal to readers today, to whom the authentic voices of 1914-1918 are Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Edward Thomas.

SAMUEL J. LOOKER.

BOOK OF THE MONTH

The Solitary Man, by Richard Church, Dent 7/6d. Edition limited to 900 copies.

ANY collection of verse published today must be heavy with the burden of war if the poet is not an escapist—and it is clear that poets nowadays are much less so than the mere newspaper reading public. Mr. Richard Church's verse is of a kind which has something to say and says it with the greatest clarity and economy of words possible. *A House in Wartime* describes the feelings of the author in an old house during an air-raid. It is moving and combines the atmosphere of mellowness of old things worn smooth by time, all the romantic richness of detail accumulated by the care of generations subject to dissolution in a moment, consumed by fire, that was the fate of so many of our houses full of the dignity of history and tradition last year. In *France* 1940 seven short stanzas give more of the feeling of those desperate days than the masses of turgid stuff written about it since, with the poem's perfect ending of eternal and unfailing cock-crow and the green grass that nothing can destroy.

When Mr. Church tries to write, however, with a more popular appeal he is not so successful. *The Solitary Man* which gives its title to the whole collection is a little too obviously intent on showing the writer taking his station in the line, lost and remote, becoming an obscure cipher, a cancelled soul. If men of great individuality have to serve as units of a greater machine we do not agree that they should therefore be forced to give up their personal identity. otherwise the whole reason for fighting at all falls to the ground and democracy becomes a breath wasting word. In *The Cycle* too it seems that the poet has felt himself obliged to force the note of realism with a lavish sprinkling of bombs and "the loud rending of children's limbs." Mr. Church may have been in a position to hear this lamentable occurrence and note its particular sound, but the suspicion creeps in that the words were written for effect rather than an objective impression of reality. In the best poetry so far produced by this war there is none of this pseudo-realism. In the final poem The *Unborn Historian*, however, there is a deeper and consoling thought in the vision of the destined singer of the human race yet unborn, looking from the hills of the future who will find in our mad story and present confusion a motive for singing which shall enshrine our despair.

The second section deals with *Another War* more spiritual, more thoughtful, and contains the best poems in the book. The present war has had one excellent effect on our poets and that is to take them from the petty details of a too busy literary life and in their enforced freedom give them time to write poetry, to linger over "the flowering word, the syllable sepals" as Mr. Church writes in *The Word*, the distilling or thought into the seed of wisdom. Is it not to this that we owe, too, the *East Coker* series from T. S. Eliot? It will be found perhaps by Church's unborn historian that these war years have produced greater poetry than the whole inter-war period. We may excuse our daily press for not finding it. They never discover anything even when it is under their noses.

The felicity of language in this second section is much above the others and the more evident note of personal feeling makes the poems in it much more memorable. *The Hero* in particular will find an echo in every woman's heart. The last section is made up of *Survivals*, that problem that all poets know so well, the fate of poems one has written in the past, those once so much cherished children of the mind that the writer is still attached to and wishes to have their chance with posterity along with his last and best work. Mr. Church has put these at the end of his book, and they are certainly below the level of the first two sections with the exception of one, *Revolt*, a gem containing a whole philosophy for poets

Richard Church is already well known for his prose but it is as a poet that we recommend him to our readers and as such that he will be known to future generations more hopeful than ours. In one of his best known poems *Riding up the Hill*, he has perhaps expressed with greater intensity the voice of his generation which has seen so much of death and destruction, that generation for whom the primrose is splashed with human blood, whose maturity was but the waiting between one war and another with:—

> The wounded mind that will forever bleed
> Forever drain you of the power to love
> To cherish anything for more than a day.

He knows though that the greater the height, the greater the range of vision when the horrors of the plain become but a little cloud on the horizon, so he tells us:—

> Ride on, my brother, still higher up the hill.
> Then look again, and tell me what you see.

WREY GARDINER.

THE new Resurgam* is a good one, full of vitality and a proof that the series is maintaining its level with interesting examples of the work of new poets. Of the dozen poems printed here "Speak, O speak" begins well but has been carried too far beyond the original point of inspiration and ends with some dull flat lines such as

A labourer's joy in labour and a mother's in conception which might have been true in a William Morris Utopia but a little two rosy for these days of derisive exactitude, but "*Weary am I and sad*" with its biblical rhythm does not fail the reader and sustains its mood of disillusion and self questioning. "*Prepare a shroud*" too, with its bitter indictment and inventory of what goes to make the ruin of our world is completely successful. There is no obscurity or straining after effect by conjuring with words rather too frequent among modern poets today. Everything is assimilated and understood immediately and there is more food for thought and criticism of life than is usual in a young man's work. It is to be hoped that we shall hear more of Mr. Litvinoff.

The Oxford magazine *Kingdom Come* has been reorganized and is now edited by Alan Rook, Stefan K. Schimanski and Henry Treece. Mr. Schimanski writes a very interesting editorial on the status of the poet in the world we live in. It is penetrating and intelligent above the average. There are the usual bunch of well known names common in first numbers—the magazine is so unlike the original as to be almost a new production—such as Herbert Read, Kingsley Martin and the Rt. Hon. J. C. Wedgwood. The best of the poems is by one of the editors Henry Treece who is well known as the most outstanding of the New Apocalypse school, of whom there are others represented here Alex Comfort and Nicholas Moore, for example, as well as two translations from Rainer Maria Rilke and Pierre Jean Jouve. A penetrating review by Henry Treece says what badly wanted saying of Rowse's Poems of a Decade. This is an interesting issue and *Horizon*, hitherto undisturbed in its possession of first place among magazines of this kind will have to look to its laurels.

"The Northman" edited by Robert Greacen is the magazine of Belfast University and has some good things in it, worthily bearing out its contention that there is an intellectual renaissance in Northern Ireland. W.G.

**Conscripts, by Emanual Litvinoff. No. 6 Resurgam Younger Poets, Favil Press* 1/-.

Kingdom Come, 32 *Sedgecombe Avenue, Kerton, Middlesex.*

The Northman, 66 *Stranmillis Road, Belfast.*

The Ballad of the Mari Lwyd, by Vernon Watkins. Faber & Faber 6/-

I was very anxious to see this book, having, like most of us, admired Watkins' work in *Life and Letters*. I was particularly impatient for his long poem, because of the intense awareness which he had shown of the gravity of the present metrical impasse. The classical reaction away from stress pattern has unfortunately gone with a type of image play which automatically renders the idea stationary, like a crystal image. Watkins has seen the necessity of a break with free verse, and has made it. His attack is both headlong and uncompromising.

There is a fatuous remark on the jacket to the effect that the only influence apparent upon Watkins' poetry is that of Yeats. There is probably nothing more damaging than comparative criticism unintelligently conducted. Not only are other influences, individual ones, far more apparent; the most significant point is that Watkins, in common with almost all the really young poets—though he is older than most of them—has come to stand in the full tradition of the older Romanticism, complete with its metrical appliances.

The ballad especially—a headlong affair, humorous and grim, saved from doggerel only by its dramatic content and the obvious craftsmanship which Watkins shows—is the lineal descendent of the stylized ballad of the early nineteenth century. It has the incantation form, the liturgical echoes, and a good deal of the diablerie. The metre and the treatment have unbidden associations with the most improbable writers:—

> The sleet of the stars fell cold and thin
> till we turned and it touched our crown;
> then we yearned for the heat in the marrow of sin,
> for the fire of a drinkers' town . .
> To see the white beer rise in the glass
> and the brown beer leap from the jug . . .

It is a testimonial to Watkins that he has put an edge of poetry on to the Kipling-Chesterton bag of tricks. He has contrived it by an un-English appreciation of internal sound values and patterns, and by an assimilation into his work of the better features of imagism and the classical tradition. The total effect fits not only the Welsh waits but the pitifully grisly rhymers who have taken their places. I do not personally feel that this is a great poem, in the way in which "The Ancient Mariner" was a great poem and the foundation of a movement. Its place has been rather usurped by the more truly involuntarist romantics, and one feels that poetry will

follow Hendry and Treece in the revival, rather than this particular work of Watkins. I suspect Watkins of being a close student of Wilde among others, and the chief peril to his poem is that it will be set as a cantata by Constant Lambert.

If the Mari Lwyd is a tour de force, it is in Watkins' lyrics that his contribution both to the metrical problem and to the future of romanticism lies. The blurb is even more grotesque in the light of these poems. *The Windows of Breath* owes its line of imagery and a good deal of its treatment to Francis Thompson. Contact with other members of the Apocalypse is apparent, but Watkins is the most formal and the sanest of them. There is precious little trace of Dylan Thomas, his conscious indiscipline of image being a long way from Watkins. Of the specifically Welsh tricks of line structure, one finds very little. The urgency of the metrical difficulty is very present in these shorter poems, solved with varying degrees of success. He is even led into Sapphics in *From my Loitering*. Now and then one strikes a line—

> Old Triton Time responds to every mood—
> Deep darkness—O delight . . .

which show him grasping backwards into conscious romantic imagery, trying to unite it with the mind pictures and symbols which dominate verse now. The general effect if one traces all the multiplicity of influences is not that Watkins is a derivative writer, but that he is sifting without bias the whole body of Welsh and English literature and literary technic, to see which of its elements are suited to the present situation. But there is an underived and private talent also, which one feels has been neither stirred up by reading other people's work nor consciously polished. Poems like *Griefs of the Sea* and *The Mother and Child* show it best though some of his finest poems, including *The Foal*, are not in this book. His imagery is not private, and that commonest image of the times, the bone, seems to have a more hopeful meaning for him than for most—it is neither the stylized bone of the New Writing school nor the image of inevitable death which obsesses the Apocalypse.

I still feel that he suffers from a failure to see the tragedy of man as the Apocalypse sees it, and also from an incertitude about the nature of the myth which he is interpreting. So far, he seems to live in two literary worlds. Much of his work stands in the transition from classical to romantic, whose parallels one can find in Crabbe and Henry Kirke White. Most of his shorter lyrics are a part of the new romantic school itself, and they constitute a part of it whose influence may be highly important in the next few years. ALEX COMFORT.

An Anthology of German Poetry, 1880-1940 *by Jethro Bithell. (Methuen, 7/6d.)*

In these days of stress when men's sense of perspective is subject to strange lapses under the exigencies of war, books such as Mr. Jethro Bithell's "An Anthology of German Poetry, 1880-1940"—and they are all too rare—serve as a timely reminder to us that those who are now our bitterest enemies have, in their day, made their not inconsiderable contribution towards the cultural advancement of Europe.

Despite the preposterous impositions of Nazidom's fanatical despots, the temporary eclipse of German letters is partial rather than total, thanks to the tireless efforts of those exiles from the Third Reich who foster the precious flame in sanctuaries where the withering breath of national socialism cannot reach, and whose verse is liberally represented in this book.

It is, of course, possible to trace parallel courses in our own poetic evolution, and that of France and Germany, though the trends have not necessarily been contemporaneous; but the divergences ordinarily due to time lag and the impinging of purely national traits, grew with abnormal rapidity upon the advent of Hitler and his minions. Until, today, the regimentation of all forms of art in Central Europe to conform to the propaganda requirements of total war has virtually stifled all spontaneous creative impulse.

None-the-less it is remarkable that of the sixty-six poets represented here only two were born in this century. Can it be traced back, we wonder, to the last world war and its aftermath of poverty, hunger and want that, unlike the eruption of the "modern school" of versifiers in Britain, no younger generation of German poets came to maturity in the "entre deux guerres."

That the compiler's instructive and indispensable Introduction reads in places rather like a "literary Baedeker" is perhaps inevitable, in that so much solid factual material has had to be condensed into a mere sixty pages. From it we learn, among other things, how some of the visionary verse of writers like Wilhelm von Scholz served (no doubt unwittingly) as a peg on which the Nazis were later to hang the blood-stained cloak of their fanatical ideology, as did the wilfully misconstrued theorising of Nietzsche. Here, also, is to be found a concise account of the poetical aspirations of Stefan George (spiritual father of many of our own modernist poets) and Rilke, the two most considerable figures of the period under review.

It is marred by an occasional sweeping statement which the author would have difficulty in substantiating, and by some minor inaccuracies; in endeavouring, for example, to define the difference between impressionism and expressionism, he resorts to an unhappy analogy when he maintains that "the impressionist sees like a painter; the expressionist like a seer." For, surely it is the function of the painter to apply "the inner vision" to the things he reproduces? Furthermore, painting itself is no less subject to this broad classification as poetry.

Such minor blemishes aside, this anthology is a notable contribution towards the all too scanty documentation of German letters, and one which the academic student and the lay reader alike will value.

E. CURT PETERS.

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Catherine Brewster Toosey, (Grey Walls Press 2/6).

There is a quaint charm in many of these verses and an underlying serenity which seems to gleam through the most bewildering of war-time wonderings. Some of the lines in this concentrated poetry, however, bear the marks of striving and so weary the would be reader before that calm mood, so necessary to the absorption of rhythm, comes on him.

A pleasant sensitiveness is found in the nature poems, notably in "February," "River Wind," and 'Snow Sea, while the beauty of a living Faith soothes in "God wakes the Country."

This is a collection which will appeal to those who appreciate the sometimes rather harsh—and so symbolic—attributes of the poetry of our times.

NORAH DE COURCY.

NOTES AND NEWS

On Saturday November 22nd. Mr. John Lehmann of the Hogarth Press addressed a meeting of the International Art Centre at 22, St. Petersburg Place on the very interesting subject of the effect of the war on the mind of the writer rather from a European than an English standpoint. As he edits "New Writing" he is in a good position to gauge the attitude of the younger generation to the tide of evil things that has swallowed up one country after another. The speaker illustrated his theme by reading parts of some recently published books which throw a strong light on the problem, notably Hemingway's *For Whom The Bell Tolls* and also some poems. Mr. Lehmann answered questions put by members of the Centre and discussed with them afterwards in an informal manner the substance of a very interesting talk.

We regret to announce the death of Alfred McFarlane, the ex-newspaper boy poet, on November 1st. He had sold newspapers at the age of seven, served in the Royal Navy and been a London Fireman. He began life and ended it in very poor circumstances.

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